

in which to do her baking. In summer she cooks out-of-doors over an open fire.

There is little furniture in your cottage, and what there is is rough. A box with a crude mattress on it is the bed. The table is made of boards laid on trestles. (A trestle is a support similar to a sawhorse.) There are some three-legged stools and a chest. Your food is cooked in an iron pot and eaten from dishes made of baked and hardened clay. You have no lamps or even candles. This doesn't matter, however, because nobody in the family can read and everyone goes to bed at sundown and gets up at sunrise. All the members of your family wear woolen clothes winter and summer.

**Your food is uninteresting.** Your meals are simple and consist of the same things over and over again—mostly bread and meat. You eat few vegetables and fruits; you have no tea or coffee and very little milk. You have salt, but no pepper or any of the other spices so common today. You use no sugar, and if your food is sweetened at all, it is with honey or occasionally with fruit juices.

**You live on a manor.** Your cottage is one of a dozen or more which stand together by the side of a winding, unpaved road. The cottages form a village belonging to a noble, or a knight, whose large house is nearby. The village and the farms around



BLACKSMITH SHOP IN DARK AGES

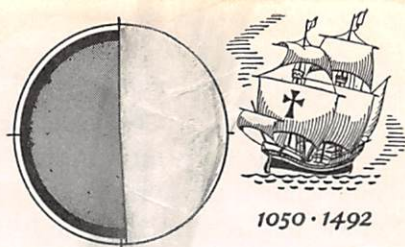
it are called a *manor*, and the noble who owns it is called the lord of the manor. The noble holds your father and the other men on the manor as *serfs*. This means that they are not free men, but are subject to the lord of the manor. They have to work for the lord. They farm his land part of the time, help build and repair his roads and bridges, and serve him in other ways. Your father and the other serfs are not slaves, but they are the next thing to it. They may not be sold, as slaves can be, but they have to remain on the manor—they are “bound to the soil,” as the saying is. If the land is sold, they serve the new owner. They are not allowed to own their land outright, yet they are not allowed to go elsewhere to look for other lands or to find other jobs. They may not even leave the manor without the lord's permission.

**The manor is nearly self-sufficient.** We have seen how you and your family and your neighbors live on the manor. But what is the connection between your manor and others? The truth is that your manor has very little to do with others. It is almost *self-sufficient*. By self-sufficient we mean it can get along by itself, without receiving many products from the outside and without making many things to sell or trade. The food eaten on the manor is grown on it. The manor has its own blacksmith shop and its own mill where all the grain is ground. From the hides of animals raised on the manor the men make shoes for the people

SERF AND COTTAGE  
IN DARK  
AGES



# The Old World Finds a New World Beyond Its Horizon



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## *What this chapter is about*

The history of our country might be compared to the steps in a long, long walk — a long march from the past to the present. Many people have taken part in this march of history, and we ourselves are taking the step which marks the present. What the future steps may be, we do not know. By looking back at the steps taken in the past and at the people who took them, however, we may learn how to direct our own steps better in the present and the future.

The march of American history did not begin in this country, but in Europe. In our first chapter, therefore, we shall turn

back to Europe. You will discover how the long march started, and how the steps happened to turn to a new world across the water. In this chapter you will find the answers to the following questions:

1. How did changing conditions in Europe make possible important geographical discoveries?
2. Why did European seamen seek a water route to the Far East, and how did they find it?
3. Why did Columbus believe he could reach the East by sailing west, and how did this belief lead him to America?

## 1. How Did Changing Conditions in Europe Make Possible Important Geographical Discoveries?

### HOW PEOPLE LIVED IN WESTERN EUROPE ABOUT THE YEAR 1000

In western Europe about the year 1000, during a time often called the Dark Ages, each little neighborhood lived by itself. It was almost as though the villages were set apart on separate islands. The people of one village hardly knew what happened in other villages only a few miles away. To understand the life of most of the people, suppose that you were living in Europe about that time. What would your life be like?

**Your home and its furniture are very primitive.** You and your father and mother and brothers and sisters live in a cottage built of wood. It has no windows. The roof of the cottage is of thatch, that is, a thick covering of straw or reeds or leaves. The hard-packed earth is the only floor. There are only two openings in the cottage. One is the door, and one is a hole in the roof to let out the smoke from the fire. Unfortunately, the hole also lets in the rain. There is no chimney, and your mother has no oven